

I. Amendments to the Claims

Please amend claims 1 and 39 as indicated below.

Claim 1 (currently amended): A method for preparing a tablet, ~~comprising~~ consisting essentially of the steps of:

forming an aqueous slurry containing a mixture of microcrystalline cellulose in the form of a wet cake and silicon dioxide having a particle size from about 1 nm to about 100 μm ;

drying said slurry to obtain an excipient comprising a plurality of agglomerated particles of microcrystalline cellulose in intimate association with said silicon dioxide, the amount of silicon dioxide being from about 0.1% to about 20% relative to the amount of microcrystalline cellulose, by weight;

then mixing ~~an~~ a moisture-sensitive active ingredient with said excipient in a ratio from about 1:99 to about 99:1 to obtain a mixture; and
compressing said mixture into a tablet.

Claim 39 (currently amended): A method for preparing a tablet, ~~comprising~~ consisting essentially of the steps of:

(a) forming an aqueous slurry of microcrystalline cellulose in the form of wet cake;

(b) forming an aqueous slurry of silicon dioxide having a particle size of from about 1 nm to about 100 μm ;

(c) separately introducing said microcrystalline cellulose slurry and said silicon dioxide slurry separately into a drying apparatus for combination therein, to obtain an excipient comprising a plurality of agglomerated particles of microcrystalline cellulose in intimate association with said silicon dioxide, the amount of silicon dioxide being from about 0.1% to about 20% relative to the amount of microcrystalline cellulose, by weight; then

(d) mixing ~~an~~ a moisture-sensitive active ingredient with said excipient in a ratio of from about 1:99 to about 99:1 to obtain a mixture; and

(e) compressing said mixture into a tablet.